

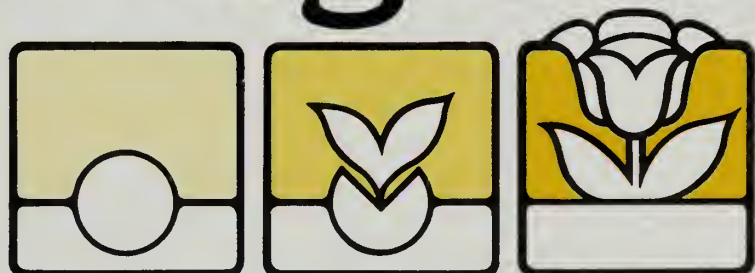
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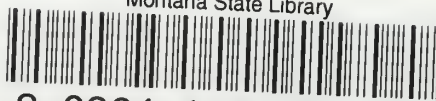


# Your child's Individualized Education Program.



Help a child grow.

SECOND EDITION



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## Dear Parents:

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In Parents' Guides 1 and 2, we reviewed the new law providing for education of handicapped children, and outlined the Special Education evaluation and Child Study Team processes. This booklet speaks specifically about the **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** which is required by law to be provided for every handicapped child in the school system. While reading Parents' Guide 3, you may wish to refresh your memory by referring back to Parents' Guides 1 and 2.

Every parent of a handicapped child should become familiar with the term "Individualized Education Program" or "IEP," and know what it should contain. The total effectiveness of the new law strongly depends on the concerned parents who understand and monitor it.

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## In the past, many handicapped children were treated alike.

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The law changes this! Now, your school district must develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for every handicapped student it serves. The IEP must take into account each child's individual needs, and provide a well-rounded program to meet those needs. Every child who needs Special Education must have an Individualized Education Program, and the IEP must be reviewed and revised at least once a year.

## What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

The IEP is a written statement which must outline the current performance level of your child, annual goals to be achieved by him or her, as well as a list of short-term objectives that contribute to the annual goals.

The services to be provided your child must also be listed, along with a statement of the extent to which your child will be able to participate in regular school programs. The IEP also states how the success of the program will be evaluated.

## **What should you do before your child's IEP is developed?**

As we explained in Parents' Guide 2, the IEP is developed by you, a representative of your school district, your child's teacher, a special education professional, your child (if appropriate), and any of a variety of professionals. This group is called the Child Study Team, and team members work together to decide what is best for your child, based on a complete evaluation of his or her physical, mental and emotional development.

### **Here are some things to think about before the Child Study Team meets to discuss your child's IEP:**

- 1.** Before an IEP can be written for a child, his educational needs must be fully evaluated. **Be sure that the evaluation has been conducted to your satisfaction** (See Parents' Guide 2), and that you have been properly informed about all evaluation procedures. If you wish, you can see the tests themselves, as well as the results. And someone must help you interpret the tests and results, if you want to know.
- 2.** The IEP recommended by your school district will be based in part on your child's academic records, if any. **You have a right to see those records**, and have them explained to you. If you disagree with something in the records, you can ask to have it removed, or insert a statement of your own to supplement or explain the records.
- 3. Be sure you understand the law and your rights under it.** The law is on the side of your child, so don't be afraid to speak up for everything to which your child is entitled.
- 4. Know your child.** Prepare for the meeting by looking at your child realistically, and trying to put his strengths and weaknesses into words. Write down what you want him to achieve in his school program. Your input about your child is valuable. Be prepared to give it!



# What should you do at the IEP meeting?

As the parent, you have a right and responsibility to participate in developing your child's IEP. You are an equal partner with the other people on the Child Study Team, and an authority on the needs of your child.

In fact, your child's IEP can't legally be developed unless you have the chance to provide input, approve, and sign it. The school is required by law to encourage you to participate, so take advantage of this opportunity to help the school people see your child's needs through the eyes of an expert—you!

## **During the meeting, remember:**

- **EXPRESS HOW YOU FEEL.** What you have to say is important. If you don't say what you think, the school people can't use your input.
- Insist that the school people **COMMUNICATE WITH YOU IN TERMS YOU UNDERSTAND.** If you don't understand something, ask questions, and be sure that the answers are made clear to you.
- If you feel that the school district's suggested IEP for your child is not appropriate, **YOU MAY REFUSE TO APPROVE THE PLACEMENT AND IEP.**
- The school district may not, **WITHOUT YOUR APPROVAL,** make a major change in your child's educational status or IEP.
- Should you consider the placement or program for your child inappropriate, **YOU MAY INITIATE A HEARING** by filing a written request to the chairman of the Board of Trustees of your local district. This request should include a statement of the reasons for the hearing and the names and addresses of the parties involved. (See Parents' Guide 4 for details.)
- No parent or guardian of a child placed in a Special Education program **WILL BE REQUIRED TO PERFORM DUTIES NOT REQUIRED OF OTHER PARENTS** whose children are enrolled in public schools unless specifically agreed to by both parties in writing.

- Your consent for the placement of, or IEP for, your child **MAY BE REVOKED AT ANY TIME**. If you do revoke consent, your child will remain in his or her current placement until the matter is settled. In the event informal mediation meetings are unsuccessful, a request by the parent for a formal hearing may be necessary.
- At the Child Study Team meeting, every attempt will be made to reach agreement on an appropriate placement and IEP. You are encouraged to attend and participate, and you must give written consent before the IEP for your child may be implemented.

## **Reviewing your child's program.**

Montana law states that a comprehensive education re-evaluation must be completed on your child no less than once every three years, if he or she is placed in a Special Education program. You may, however, request a comprehensive educational evaluation anytime you feel one is necessary.

If your child is placed in a Special Education program, his or her progress in that program will be reviewed at least annually. And you have the right to request an IEP review at any time during the school year, if you think one is required.



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# The law clearly states that every child's IEP must contain at least the following:

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1. A statement of the student's **present levels of educational performance**. This must be based on evaluations in all relevant skill areas;
2. A statement of annual **goals**. These are general statements of where you want the student to be in a particular area of academics or related services;
3. A statement of **short-term instructional objectives**. These are the specific steps for reaching the goals;
4. A statement of **specific educational services** to be provided. Since under the law each handicapped child must be provided all services necessary to meet his or her special education and related needs, the IEP must list all needed services;
5. A statement of the extent to which the child can participate **in regular education programs**;
6. **The dates for the beginning, and anticipated duration of services**;
7. **Objective criteria and evaluation procedures** to measure the student's progress in meeting the instructional objectives.



**EXAMPLES**

Now that we have looked at IEPs generally, what they should contain and how you should participate in their development, let’s look at some specifics of an IEP. Always keep in mind, though, that no two students are alike. What might be good for one student might not do at all for another, even though they both have the same handicap.

**The following examples are meant to start you thinking about your child’s needs:**

EXAMPLE 1. Student A is considered to be Educably Mentally Handicapped after evaluations with which his parents agree. Because of his handicap and speech problem, his parents think that speech therapy and part time in a special class for his first school year is the most appropriate setting for him. Here are some of the goals and objectives that might meet this student’s needs during his first year in school.

**STUDENT A**  
Subject: Reading/ Alphabet

Long-term Goal	Short-term Instructional Objectives
To be able to identify and print A to Z by June.	To be able to identify and print A to M by February.

Subject: Math

To know numbers to 100 by Christmas break.	To write numbers 1 to 50 by October 15.
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Subject: Speech

To correctly pronounce 20 words that give the student trouble by Christmas break.	To correctly pronounce without whispering 10 words with which student is having trouble by October 15.
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EXAMPLE 2. Student B is also evaluated to Educably Mentally Handicapped. However, he does not have any other handicap nor special educational problem. It is decided by his parents and school officials that, with extra help at home and some individual attention from an aide, he can be placed in a regular first grade classroom at his neighborhood school. Here is one set of goals and objectives appropriate for this student.

## STUDENT B

Subject: Reading/Alphabet

### Long-term Goal

Identify and print entire alphabet by Christmas break.

### Short-term Instructional Objectives

To identify and be able to print the letters A-M by October 15.

EXAMPLE 3. Student C is academically at grade level. However, because of her physical handicap, she is in a wheelchair and needs extensive physical therapy and occupational therapy. The student's physical condition is no excuse for excluding her from public schools since they are required by law to be architecturally accessible.

This student's IEP must include goals and objectives for her physical therapy and occupational therapy (these, by law, are considered to be **related services**). Her goals and objectives in these areas should be based on a prescription from her orthopedic doctor. Part of her IEP might include the following.

## STUDENT C

Subject: Physical therapy (a related service)

### Long-term Goal

Transfer to walker by June.

### Short-term Instructional Objectives

To be able to rise and stand in front of wheelchair by Christmas break.

The above examples are hypothetical, but they give you an idea of the differences in IEPs and some of the things they might consist of.

## What should you do after the IEP is developed?

Your responsibility does not end when you agree to your child's IEP. There are many things you can do to ensure that the IEP is put to work properly, and that your child makes as much progress as he can.



## **The time you sign your student's IEP is also a good time to:**

- 1.** Discuss when you can visit your child's classroom. **LET THE TEACHER KNOW YOU ARE INTERESTED** in the progress of your child.
- 2.** Ask how you can **HELP YOUR CHILD AT HOME** in areas where extra help might be needed.
- 3.** Let the teacher know you are as close as the telephone if for some reason she might need to call you.
- 4.** Take the time to **EXPLAIN SPECIAL EQUIPMENT** which your child uses. Don't take it for granted that teachers are experts in "handicap equipment." This might be the first time they have ever taught a handicapped student and what is old routine to you may be something entirely new to them.
- 5.** **VOLUNTEER** to be a room parent or assist with special projects. This gets you inside the classroom and gives you an opportunity to see how your youngster functions with the other students and how the teacher works with your child in the classroom.

## **How will you assure that your child is making progress toward the goals in the IEP?**

It is important to monitor your child's education program. Here are some of the things you can do:

- 1. Ask that a sample of your child's written work come home.** This should tell you something. If you aren't satisfied, make an appointment with the teacher, and ask questions until you get answers. It might be that new strategies are needed to aid the student.
- 2.** Don't ever wait for the teacher to contact you. Take the initiative. **Call or visit.**

3. While in the classroom, **notice how much** your child **takes part in class activities**. Is he called on, or is he just a fixture because the law says he has to be there?
4. **Does the teacher expect him to participate**, or does she let him use his handicap as a means of escaping the need to work to capacity?
5. **Is your child reasonably happy?** Does he look forward to going to school, or make excuses to stay home? Watch for signs telling you that you need a conference with the teacher.
6. Most important of all, **is there evidence that your child is making good progress** toward the short-term instructional objectives and long-term goals that you agreed to? If not, something had better be done, and it's as much your responsibility as the teacher's (or anyone else's) to start the ball rolling.

The IEP can be a very effective communication tool between parent and teacher to help the handicapped child reach his academic potential, whatever that potential may be.

Remember, it is not just the responsibility of the teacher to see that the IEP is written and implemented. It is important that the IEP be seen through a parent's eyes, and it is the parent's job to see that the goals outlined in the IEP are being reached.



**For information and guidance,**

**Contact your school principal.**

**OR**

**Write: Help a child grow.**

**Office of Public Instruction  
Helena, MT 59601**

**OR**

**Call the Office of Public Instruction –  
toll-free 1-800-332-3402 and ask  
for “Help a child grow.”**





# Help a child grow.

Office of Public Instruction  
Georgia Rice, Superintendent  
Helena, Montana 59601